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Question: What were the major debates in the Constituent Assembly?

Answer:

During the drafting of the Indian Constitution, the Constituent Assembly held several significant debates. These debates aimed to ensure that the Constitution addressed the aspirations and rights of all sections of society, balancing the country's diversity and unity. These discussions played a crucial role in shaping the foundation of Indian democracy. The major issues were the following:

1. Objective and Preamble of the Constitution:

One of the first major debates was on the “Objectives Resolution”, presented by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on December 13, 1946.

The debate focused on defining the purpose of the Constitution and the nature of the Indian state.

It was decided that India would be a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic republic.

The ideals of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity were included in the Preamble to reflect the core philosophy of the Constitution.

2. Secularism:

Secularism was a crucial issue of debate.

The discussion centered around whether India should be declared a secular state or have an official religion.

It was agreed that India would have no official religion, and all religions would be treated equally by the state.

3. Federal Structure:

A significant debate revolved around whether India should adopt a federal or unitary structure.

The members debated how powers should be divided between the central and state governments.

It was ultimately decided that India would have a federal structure with a strong center.

4. Fundamental Rights:

Fundamental Rights were extensively debated.

Members discussed the rights to be guaranteed to all citizens, including:

Right to Freedom

Right to Equality

Right to Religious Freedom

Right to Constitutional Remedies

These rights were ensured for all citizens without discrimination.

5. Directive Principles of State Policy:

The Directive Principles of State Policy aimed to provide guidelines to the government for ensuring social and economic justice.

The debate focused on whether these principles should be enforceable by courts or remain as guiding principles.

It was decided that these would not be legally enforceable but would serve as essential goals for governance.

6. Language Issue:

The language debate was one of the most contentious issues due to India's linguistic diversity.

The key question was which language should be India's national language.

Hindi was proposed as the national language, but it faced opposition from representatives of southern states.

It was decided that both Hindi and English would be used as official languages.

7. Reservation and Social Justice:

The debate on reservation focused on providing special rights and opportunities to socially and educationally backward communities, including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar emphasized the importance of social justice.

It was decided to provide reservations in education, employment, and political representation for these communities.

8. Integration of Princely States:

Another key debate revolved around how to integrate princely states into the Indian Union.

Members discussed the terms and conditions under which princely states would join the Union.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel played a significant role in ensuring that most princely states willingly joined the Indian Union.

9. Universal Suffrage and Elections:

There was a heated debate on whether voting rights should be given to all adults or restricted to certain sections of society.

It was decided to implement universal adult suffrage, granting voting rights to every adult citizen, regardless of gender, caste, or class.

10. Emergency Provisions:

The debate on emergency provisions focused on the powers of the central government during times of crisis.

Members discussed when and how these powers should be used.

It was agreed that emergency provisions would be implemented only under extraordinary circumstances.

11. Women's Rights:

Women's rights were a critical topic of debate.

The members ensured that women would have equal rights as men in all aspects, including property, education, and employment.

Equal representation and opportunities for women were emphasized.

12. Minority Rights:

Minority rights were debated to protect the interests of religious and cultural minorities.

It was decided that minorities would have the right to preserve their culture, language, and religion.

They were also granted the freedom to establish and manage educational institutions.

Conclusion:

The debates in the Constituent Assembly were critical in shaping the Indian Constitution. These discussions ensured that the Constitution reflected the values of justice, equality, and inclusivity. The assembly's deliberations laid the foundation for a democratic, secular, and united India. The Constitution that emerged from these debates continues to guide India's governance and uphold the rights of its citizens.